DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 322 808 HE 023 625

TITLE Retention of Degree-Declared Public Postsecondary Students (Discussion Item).
INSTITUTION Indiana State Commission for Higher Education, Indianapolis.
PUB DATE 8 Sep 89
NOTE 18p.; For related documents, see ED 319 431, HE 023 626 and HE 023 628.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Black Students; College Students; *Dropouts; Educational Attainment; Full Time Students; Higher Education; Longitudinal Studies; Part Time Students; *Postsecondary Education; Public Education; *School Holding Power; State Colleges; State Universities; Trend Analysis
IDENTIFIERS *Indiana; Indiana Commission for Higher Education

ABSTRACT

The study examined retention and degree completion of Indiana public postsecondary students as reported by the Indiana Student Information System (SIS). The study identified freshman students (N=69,410) from 1984-85 who had declared their intention to obtain degrees and then tracked the progress of this group of students as reported each year through SIS. The study's conclusions were: (1) most students at all degree levels were part-time, (2) the degree completion rate for full-time baccalaureate students looked promising, (3) the degree completion rate for full-time black students is less than half the rate for all students in that category, (4) retention rates for part-time students at all degree levels irrespective of race looked low enough and inconsistent enough to merit special attention. Recommendations included continuing the monitoring of retention and degree completion rates beyond 1990-91, creating a task force to recommend a plan for improving part-time students' rates of progress toward degrees, inviting institutions to set targets for the degree completion rates of black students, and proposing the extension of state student assistance to blacks who attend specified historically black colleges and universities. (GLR)

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ED322808

# RETENTION OF DEGREE-DECLARED PUBLIC POSTSECONDARY STUDENTS

(Discussion Item)

September 8, 1989

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HE023625

**COMMISSION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**
Friday, September 8, 1989

**DISCUSSION ITEM B:** Retention of Degree-Declared Public Postsecondary Students: Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

Staff Recommendation — For Information only.

Background — This paper is based on a retention and degree completion study undertaken by the Commission using data annually reported by the institutions for the Indiana Student Information System (SIS). The study identified freshman students from 1984-85 who had declared their intention to obtain degrees and then tracked the progress of this group of students as reported each year through SIS. Thus far, four years of data are available. The study is planned to continue through 1990-91, which means that eventually it will include seven years of data concerning students who were freshmen in 1984-85.

The retention and degree completion study led in brief to the following conclusions: that (a) most students at all degree levels are part-time students; (b) in general, the degree completion rate for full-time baccalaureate students looks promising; (b) the degree completion rate for full-time Black baccalaureate students is less than half the rate for all students in that category; (c) retention rates for part-time students at all degree levels irrespective of race look low enough and inconsistent enough to merit special attention.

On the basis of these conclusions, the policy paper proposes (a) continuing the monitoring of retention and degree completion rates beyond 1990-91, (b) creating a task force to recommend a plan for improving part-time students' rates of progress toward degrees, (c) inviting the institutions to set targets for the degree completion rates of Black students, and (d) proposing the extension of state student assistance to Black Hoosiers who attend specified historically Black colleges and universities.

In October, the staff will recommend acceptance of these recommendations.

Supporting Document — *"Retention of Degree-Declared Public Postsecondary Students: Conclusions and Policy Recommendations,"* August 11, 1989

# RETENTION OF DEGREE-DECLARED PUBLIC POSTSECONDARY STUDENTS: CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

## Part One: Introduction

Access is one of the long-term goals of Indiana higher education. Traditionally, access has been treated as though it ended with admission or perhaps matriculation. Reports have focused on participation rates and enrollment trends. But access refers to educational opportunity, and in large measure opportunity means access to degree programs. An important part of improving access to postsecondary education is knowing whether enrolled students actually obtain degrees.

Degree completion matters to nearly everyone—the institutions, students, the state, and the nation. Completion rates are compelling indicators of a campus's success as a teaching institution. States invest in higher education in order to produce educated, productive citizens. Institutions most of whose students obtain degrees are in the best position to argue that they are wise stewards of the state's investment. Students who invest in an education but do not complete programs may have wasted their money. They may also be unable to enter the labor force at the level they desire. Nationally, there is great concern that the United States has lost its ability both to be competitive in international markets and to provide in the not-too-distant future adequate benefits for the elderly from a work force of declining productivity. In both cases, the problem is identified with an undereducated labor force, and solutions are couched in terms of more or better education, including education at the postsecondary level.

This policy paper is based on a retention and degree completion study undertaken with data annually reported by the institutions for the Indiana Student Information System (SIS). The study identified freshman students from 1984-85 who had declared their intention to obtain degrees. It then tracked the progress of this group (or cohort) of students as reported each year by SIS. By 1987-88, four years of data were available. Reports summarizing that information were presented to the Commission in March, April, and May of this year. Those reports, and the data on which they rest, are available upon request. The study itself will continue for another three years.

Parts two through four of this paper present conclusions about statewide degree completion rates for students in baccalaureate, associate level, and certificate programs. Part five presents policy recommendations. An appendix (a) presents tables showing graduation rates by campus for each degree level and (b) describes the data and definitions used in the retention and degree completion study.

**Part Two: Baccalaureate Students**

Table 1

Baccalaureate Students from 1984-85 Freshman Cohort
and Their Academic Progress Through 1987-88

| Status | Number | Did Not Return After 84-85 | Obtained Degree By 87-88 | Still Enrolled In 87-88 | Semester Hours Attempted Through 87-88 | No Longer Enrolled by 87-88 and Did Not Obtain Degree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| All Students | 38,266 | | | | | |
| Black Share | 2,874 | | | | | |
| All FT[1] | 10,989 | 15% | 33% | 43% | 123 | 24% |
| Black FT | 614 | 33% | 11% | 40% | 120 | 49% |
| All PT[1] | 27,277 | 30% | 5% | 38% | 69 | 57% |
| Black PT | 2,260 | 35% | 2% | 31% | 66 | 67% |

Conclusions

1. Four years are not enough to permit sound judgments about degree completion rates for baccalaureate students, even those attending full-time. The numbers in the "Still Enrolled" and "Hours Attempted" columns suggest that many of these students will obtain degrees during their fifth year of study (baccalaureate programs require an average of 124 credit hours). It appears that, over five to seven years, the degree completion rate for full-time baccalaureate students from the 1984-85 freshman cohort will exceed 60 percent.

2. Most Black students from the 1984-85 freshman cohort were baccalaureate students. Their degree completion rate over four years at Indiana institutions (see below) is not acceptable. Business as usual is not helping Black baccalaureate students to graduate from in-state institutions. Perhaps ways should be found to offer them a wider choice of institutions to attend.

3. Black full-time baccalaureate students from the 1984-85 freshman cohort were more than twice as likely as their colleagues not to return after their first year of college (33 percent never again enrolled. vs. 15 percent for all full-time baccalaureate students). They were twice as likely to leave school without obtaining degrees

[1] FT = Full-Time; PT = Part-Time

(49 percent vs. 24 percent). They were only one-third as likely to obtain degrees within four years (11 percent vs. 33 percent). On the brighter side, those who remained in school for four years appeared to be making progress at roughly the same rate as their colleagues.

4. Most baccalaureate students from the 1984-85 freshman cohort were part-time students. Seventy-one percent of them enrolled on a part-time basis during at least one of their years of study. Even among students younger than 25 (30,290 of 38,266), 65 percent attended on a part-time basis. Only at Bloomington and West Lafayette did most young students attend full-time; and even at these campuses 38 percent of all baccalaureate students younger than 25 were attending on a part-time basis.

   Part-time students from the 1984-85 freshman cohort were twice as likely as full-time students not to return after their first year of college (30 percent vs. 15 percent), and more than twice as likely to leave school without obtaining degrees (57 percent vs. 24 percent). It appears that part-time baccalaureate students represent the greatest opportunity for improving degree completion rates on a statewide basis.

5. The academic experience of Black part-time baccalaureate students was more nearly similar to the experience of all part-time baccalaureate students than was the case for Black full-time students in comparison with all full-time students. This suggests that efforts to improve degree completion rates for part-time students should simultaneously improve degree completion rates for Black students.

6. Degree completion rates for both full- and part-time baccalaureate students from the 1984-85 freshman cohort varied considerably by campus (see Tables 4 and 5 in Appendix). For example, although the four-year degree completion rate for full-time baccalaureate students averaged 33 percent, the completion rate by campus ranged from eight percent to 51 percent. For full-time Black students, the degree completion rate by campus ranged from zero to 41 percent. In both instances, so wide a range suggests there is room for improvement.

**Part Three: Associate Degree Students**

Table 2

Associate Degree Students from 1984-85 Freshman Cohort
and Their Academic Progress Through 1987-88

| Status | Number | Did Not Return After 84-85 | Obtained Degree By 87-88 | Still Enrolled In 87-88 | Semester Hours Attempted Through 87-88 | No Longer Enrolled by 87-88 and Did Not Obtain Degree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| All Students | 23,031 | | | | | |
| Black Share | 2,522 | | | | | |
| All FT | 2,721 | 28% | 49% | 10% | 120 | 41% |
| Black FT | 159 | 57% | 14% | 9% | 114 | 77% |
| All PT | 20,310 | 44% | 12% | 19% | 48 | 69% |
| Black PT | 2,363 | 51% | 6% | 16% | 48 | 78% |

## Conclusions

Associate degree students are hard to generalize about, for several reasons. Some institutions offering associate degree programs are more selective than others. Associate degree programs are seen as central to some institutions' missions but peripheral to others'. The same might be said of students' perceptions of these programs. Some students regard becoming employable or enhancing specific occupational skills as more important than obtaining degrees. According to the definitions used for this study, in 1984-85 the major providers of associate degree programs were Vincennes, a residential junior college offering both academic transfer and occupational programs, and IVTC, a commuter institution essentially without transfer options.

1. Part-time students comprised the vast majority (88 percent) of associate degree students from the 1984-85 freshman cohort. Most of them (69 percent) did not obtain degrees. Forty-four percent of these students did not return after their first year of study. After four years, just 12 percent had graduated. Another 19 percent were still in school. These students had attempted roughly 80 percent (48 of 60) of the credit hours required for graduation. At that rate, they will need five or six years to finish their degrees.

2. Not quite half of the full-time associate degree students from the 1984-85 freshman cohort obtained degrees. Although 73 percent of these students returned for a second year of study, after four years just 49 percent had graduated. Another ten percent were still in school. These had attempted nearly enough credit hours (120) for baccalaureate degrees (124-26). This suggests that many of these students had changed their educational goals and were now enrolled in baccalaureate programs.

3. Black full-time associate degree students were twice as likely as their colleagues not to return after their first year of study (57 percent never again enrolled, vs. 28 percent for all full-time associate students). They were almost twice as likely to leave school without obtaining degrees (77 percent vs. 41 percent). They were less than one-third as likely to obtain degrees within four years (14 percent vs. 49 percent). Those who remained in school for four years, however, appeared to be making progress at roughly the same rate as their colleagues.

4. There was less divergence between the academic experience of Black part-time associate degree students and their colleagues than between the experience of Black full-time associate degree students and their colleagues. This suggests that efforts to improve degree completion rates for part-time students should simultaneously improve degree completion rates for Black students.

5. Degree completion rates for both full- and part-time associate degree students from the 1984-85 freshman cohort varied considerably by campus (see Tables 6 and 7 in Appendix). For example, although after four years the degree completion rate for full-time associate degree students averaged 49 percent, the completion rate by campus ranged from zero to 65 percent. Among part-time associate degree students, the degree completion rate by campus ranged from five to 63 percent. In both instances, so wide a range suggests there is room for improvement.

6. Associate degree students from the 1984-85 freshman cohort appeared to benefit from access to transfer opportunities. At every campus where some full-time associate degree students were still enrolled after four years, the persisting students had attempted more credit hours (the range was from 81 to 132) than required for associate degrees. This suggests that, given an opportunity to raise their educational goals to the baccalaureate level, these students had done so.

## Part Four: Certificate Students

Table 3

Certificate Students from 1984-85 Freshman Cohort
And Their Academic Progress Through 1987-88

| Status | Number | Did Not Return After 84-85 | Obtained Degree By 87-88 | Still Enrolled In 87-88 | Semester Hours Attempted Through 87-88 | No Longer Enrolled by 87-88 and Did Not Obtain Degree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| All Students | 8,113 | | | | | |
| Black Share | 914 | | | | | |
| All FT | 711 | 37% | 57% | 1% | 96 | 42% |
| Black FT | 75 | 40% | 47% | 3% | 96 | 51% |
| All PT | 7,402 | 37% | 36% | 7% | 36 | 56% |
| Black PT | 839 | 43% | 22% | 10% | 39 | 68% |

### Conclusions

By and large, certificate students are presumed to be seeking skills related directly to employment. For these students, becoming employable or obtaining recognition in the workplace for enhanced skills are perceived to have higher priority than completing specified programs of study. Accordingly, one would expect low degree completion rates and low retention rates as well.

1. Ninety-one percent of the certificate students from the 1984-85 freshman cohort were part-time students. When plans are developed for improving degree completion rates for part-time students, certificate students should benefit from their implementation.

2. After four years, few certificate students from the 1984-85 freshman cohort remained in school. Fifty-seven percent of the full-time certificate students (these were few in number) and 36 percent of the part-time certificate students had obtained their certificates. One percent of the full-time students and seven percent of the part-time students were still enrolled. These data would seem to verify the hypothesis stated above.

3. Among the small percentage of certificate students that was still enrolled, more hours had been attempted than required by any certificate program (the number of semester hours required to obtain a certificate ranges from 30 to 50). Persisting full-time students had attempted 96 hours, which could have put them well on their way toward baccalaureate degrees. Persisting part-time students had attempted 36 hours, suggesting that either they were continuing to make progress toward certificates or they had moved into associate degree programs of study.

4. Among the IVTC regions, which together accounted for 96 percent of all certificate students from the 1984-85 freshman cohort, five to thirteen percent of those who enrolled as part-time students were still in school after four years. They had attempted from 24 to 42 hours. To what extent those hours represented developmental courses or non-degree courses is impossible to say.

5. Differences in the academic achievement of Black certificate students from the 1984-85 freshman cohort were smaller than for Black students seeking either associate or baccalaureate degrees. Black full-time students completed certificate programs at four-fifths (82 percent) of the rate for all full-time students.

6. Black students, both full- and part-time, persisted in certificate programs at higher rates than did certificate students as a whole. In their persistence, these Black students matched or exceeded the number of hours attempted by their colleagues. This is believed to reflect the behavior of students, who are predominantly Black, who enroll in Practical Nursing programs. One way to raise Black academic achievement in degree programs might be to build bridges to Black students who begin their studies in certificate programs.

## Part Five: Recommendations

1. The Commission for Higher Education should adopt a plan for monitoring retention and degree completion rates, using the definitions and methodology agreed upon by the institutions, and relying upon data provided by the institutions for Indiana's Student Information System. This monitoring should involve (a) a series of seven-year cohort studies, (b) the identification of a new cohort every fourth year, and (c) annual discussions of retention and degree completion trends for each cohort.[2]

2. With respect to improving degree completion rates for part-time students, the Commission should create a task force for the purpose of recommending a plan for improving part-time students' rates of progress toward degrees.[3]

3. With respect to improving degree completion rates for Black students,

   a. The Commission should invite the institutions to set targets for improved degree completion rates for their Black students and to report periodically on their progress toward those targets.

   b. The Commission should direct its staff to prepare a proposal for recommending the extension of state student assistance to Black Hoosiers who attend specified historically Black colleges and universities.

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[2] A calendar for annually monitoring retention and degree completion rates as described in the first recommendation would begin as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1988-89 | 1984-85 cohort (fifth year) |
| 1989-90 | 1984-85 cohort (sixth year) |
| 1990-91 | 1984-85 cohort (seventh year); end of first cohort study |
| 1991-92 | 1988-89 cohort (fourth year) |
| 1992-93 | 1988-89 cohort (fifth year) |
| 1993-94 | 1988-89 cohort (sixth year) |
| 1994-95 | 1988-89 cohort (seventh year); end of second cohort study |
| 1995-96 | 1992-93 cohort (fourth year) |
| etc. | |

[3] Improvements that might be considered include but are not limited to (a) incentives for full-time attendance, (b) alternatives for providing degree programs in ways making them attractive to people obliged to attend on a part-time basis, and (c) alternatives for increasing transfer opportunities. The latter might range from increasing the number of two-year degree programs at campuses that have few of them to increasing the number of articulation agreements between IVTC regions and four-year institutions.

## APPENDIX

### A. Tables

Table 4: Full-Time Baccalaureate Students from 1984-85 Freshman Cohort, by Campus, and Their Academic Progress Through 1987-88

Table 5: Part-Time Baccalaureate Students from 1984-85 Freshman Cohort, by Campus, and Their Academic Progress Through 1987-88

Table 6: Full-Time Associate Degree Students from 1984-85 Freshman Cohort, by Campus, and Their Academic Progress Through 1987-88

Table 7: Part-Time Associate Degree Students from 1984-85 Freshman Cohort, by Campus, and Their Academic Progress Through 1987-88

### B. Definitions

Retention of Degree-Declared Public Postsecondary Students: Description of the Data

Table 4

Full-Time Baccalaureate Students
from 1984-85 Freshman Cohort, by Campus,
and Their Academic Progress Through 1987-88

| Campus | Number Of Students | | Obtained Degree By 1987-88 | | Still Enrolled In 1987-88 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | All | Black | All | Black | All | Black |
| IU Bloomington | 2,320 | 156 | 36% | 6% | 44% | 34% |
| IU East | 39 | 3 | 8% | 0% | 33% | 33% |
| IU Kokomo | 83 | 0 | 17% | 0% | 31% | 0% |
| IU Northwest | 198 | 51 | 20% | 6% | 37% | 37% |
| IU South Bend | 131 | 3 | 15% | 0% | 39% | 33% |
| IU Southeast | 228 | 3 | 14% | 0% | 51% | 0% |
| IUPUI | 544 | 49 | 15% | 2% | 43% | 43% |
| IU Multiple | 502 | 32 | 49% | 41% | 37% | 41% |
| PU W Lafayette | 2,208 | 58 | 38% | 21% | 48% | 52% |
| PU Calumet | 364 | 18 | 23% | 0% | 42% | 39% |
| PU Northcentral | 92 | 3 | 24% | 0% | 33% | 33% |
| IUPU Ft Wayne | 359 | 9 | 18% | 0% | 50% | 44% |
| PU Multiple | 116 | 2 | 47% | 0% | 33% | 100% |
| Indiana State | 740 | 117 | 16% | 2% | 43% | 37% |
| U of Southern Ind | 209 | 4 | 12% | 0% | 49% | 75% |
| Ball State | 2,164 | 74 | 35% | 24% | 43% | 50% |
| Multiple Insts | 692 | 32 | 51% | 25% | 29% | 31% |
| Statewide | 10,989 | 614 | 33% | 11% | 43% | 40% |

Table 5

Part-Time Baccalaureate Students
from 1984-85 Freshman Cohort, by Campus,
and Their Academic Progress Through 1987-88

| Campus | Number Of Students | | Obtained Degree By 1987-88 | | Still Enrolled In 1987-88 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | All | Black | All | Black | All | Black |
| IU Bloomington | 1,524 | 153 | 8% | 3% | 50% | 37% |
| IU East | 642 | 19 | 2% | 0% | 32% | 11% |
| IU Kokomo | 988 | 25 | 1% | 4% | 35% | 32% |
| IU Northwest | 1,417 | 376 | 1% | 0% | 35% | 29% |
| IU South Bend | 1,431 | 90 | 2% | 0% | 34% | 27% |
| IU Southeast | 1,417 | 31 | 2% | 3% | 37% | 35% |
| IUPUI | 4,905 | 629 | 2% | 0% | 36% | 31% |
| IU Multiple | 575 | 21 | 43% | 24% | 33% | 43% |
| PU W Lafayette | 1,476 | 55 | 7% | 5% | 57% | 60% |
| PU Calumet | 2,154 | 214 | 3% | 1% | 39% | 36% |
| PU Northcentral | 808 | 28 | 1% | 0% | 36% | 29% |
| IUPU Ft Wayne | 1,988 | 84 | 1% | 0% | 40% | 23% |
| PU Multiple | 94 | 8 | 39% | 50% | 38% | 25% |
| Indiana State | 2,351 | 249 | 2% | 1% | 37% | 27% |
| U of South Ind | 1,477 | 57 | 2% | 0% | 28% | 23% |
| Ball State | 2,750 | 137 | 7% | 3% | 39% | 35% |
| Multiple Insts | 1,280 | 84 | 20% | 11% | 38% | 33% |
| Statewide | 27,277 | 2,260 | 5% | 2% | 38% | 31% |

Table 6

Full-Time Associate Degree Students
from 1984-85 Freshman Cohort, by Campus,
and Their Academic Progress Through 1987-88

| Campus | Number Of Students | | Obtained Degree By 1987-88 | | Still Enrolled In 1987-88 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | All | Black | All | Black | All | Black |
| IU Bloomington | 20 | 1 | 60% | 0% | 25% | 0% |
| IU East | 3 | 0 | 33% | 0% | 33% | 0% |
| IU Kokomo | 26 | 0 | 54% | 0% | 8% | 0% |
| IU Northwest | 17 | 6 | 6% | 0% | 6% | 0% |
| IU South Bend | 9 | 0 | 0% | 0% | 11% | 0% |
| IU Southeast | 10 | 0 | 50% | 0% | 20% | 0% |
| IUPUI | 76 | 5 | 28% | 20% | 28% | 20% |
| IU Multi | 12 | 0 | 50% | 0% | 8% | 0% |
| PU W Lafayette | 264 | 5 | 69% | 60% | 17% | 20% |
| PU Calumet | 107 | 4 | 72% | 50% | 10% | 0% |
| PU Northcentral | 49 | 1 | 49% | 0% | 12% | 0% |
| IUPU Ft Wayne | 117 | 11 | 57% | 18% | 15% | 27% |
| PU Multi | 21 | 0 | 71% | 0% | 10% | 0% |
| Indiana State | 49 | 3 | 37% | 0% | 22% | 33% |
| U of Southern Ind | 13 | 0 | 8% | 0% | 23% | 0% |
| Ball State | 125 | 3 | 48% | 0% | 18% | 33% |
| Vincennes | 1,238 | 58 | 48% | 16% | 7% | 0% |
| IVTC Gary | 52 | 22 | 4% | 5% | 4% | 9% |
| IVTC S Bend | 12 | 1 | 58% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| IVTC Ft Wayne | 17 | 2 | 12% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| IVTC Lafayette | 12 | 1 | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| IVTC Kokomo | 10 | 1 | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| IVTC Muncie | 17 | 1 | 6% | 0% | 6% | 0% |
| IVTC T Haute | 16 | 1 | 13% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| IVTC Ind'polis | 42 | 17 | 10% | 12% | 2% | 0% |
| IVTC Richmond | 9 | 1 | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| IVTC Columbus | 16 | 0 | 6% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| IVTC Madison | 4 | 0 | 25% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| IVTC Evansville | 18 | 0 | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| IVTC Sellersb'g | 11 | 0 | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| IVTC Multiple | 1 | 0 | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| Multiple Insts | 328 | 15 | 65% | 20% | 13% | 33% |
| Statewide | 2,721 | 159 | 49% | 14% | 10% | 9% |

Table 7

Part-Time Associate Degree Students
from 1984-85 Freshman Cohort, by Campus,
and Their Academic Progress Through 1987-88

| Campus | Number Of Students | | Obtained Degree By 1987-88 | | Still Enrolled In 1987-88 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | All | Black | All | Black | All | Black |
| IU Bloomington | 22 | 3 | 5% | 0% | 36% | 33% |
| IU East | 88 | 3 | 26% | 0% | 30% | 67% |
| IU Kokomo | 263 | 7 | 25% | 29% | 25% | 29% |
| IU Northwest | 189 | 52 | 12% | 6% | 24% | 33% |
| IU South Bend | 21 | 2 | 5% | 0% | 43% | 0% |
| IU Southeast | 99 | 4 | 8% | 0% | 26% | 25% |
| IUPUI | 688 | 86 | 9% | 1% | 34% | 30% |
| IU Multiple | 30 | 6 | 50% | 33% | 13% | 17% |
| PU W Lafayette | 358 | 9 | 28% | 0% | 33% | 22% |
| PU Calumet | 679 | 43 | 36% | 30% | 22% | 28% |
| PU Northcentral | 547 | 17 | 29% | 0% | 19% | 6% |
| IUPU Ft Wayne | 1,290 | 67 | 15% | 4% | 31% | 15% |
| PU Multiple | 30 | 1 | 63% | 100% | 13% | 0% |
| Indiana State | 54 | 4 | 20% | 25% | 31% | 25% |
| U of Southern Ind | 115 | 7 | 13% | 14% | 23% | 14% |
| Ball State | 319 | 20 | 21% | 20% | 18% | 25% |
| Vincennes | 4,258 | 313 | 12% | 7% | 18% | 16% |
| IVTC Gary | 1,835 | 753 | 5% | 5% | 12% | 13% |
| IVTC S Bend | 839 | 87 | 5% | 5% | 16% | 14% |
| IVTC Ft Wayne | 1,192 | 96 | 9% | 7% | 16% | 15% |
| IVTC Lafayette | 421 | 3 | 10% | 0% | 15% | 0% |
| IVTC Kokomo | 597 | 44 | 6% | 5% | 11% | 16% |
| IVTC Muncie | 944 | 83 | 7% | 6% | 13% | 11% |
| IVTC T Haute | 752 | 52 | 7% | 2% | 13% | 2% |
| IVTC Ind'polis | 1,568 | 473 | 5% | 4% | 15% | 15% |
| IVTC Richmond | 413 | 18 | 6% | 6% | 13% | 17% |
| IVTC Columbus | 635 | 19 | 10% | 0% | 17% | 5% |
| IVTC Madison | 148 | 1 | 14% | 0% | 13% | 0% |
| IVTC Evansville | 612 | 18 | 5% | 6% | 13% | 6% |
| IVTC Sellersb'g | 396 | 19 | 10% | 16% | 14% | 5% |
| IVTC Multiple | 30 | 1 | 7% | 0% | 27% | 0% |
| Multiple Insts | 878 | 52 | 31% | 15% | 28% | 27% |
| Statewide | 20,310 | 2,363 | 12% | 6% | 19% | 16% |

# RETENTION OF DEGREE-DECLARED PUBLIC POSTSECONDARY STUDENTS: DESCRIPTION OF THE DATA

The Commission for Higher Education's 1989 retention and degree completion study relies upon records from the Indiana Student Information System (SIS). Reported annually by the institutions, SIS provides one record for every person enrolled in public postsecondary degree-credit courses. In 1984-85 the institutions began to use a common system for identifying individual students. This made it possible to trace the progress of particular students, regardless of whether they changed campuses or institutions, or whether they moved in and out of higher education before obtaining degrees.

The retention and degree completion study reviews SIS records for students beginning with 1984-85. Currently four years of data—1984-85 through 1987-88—are available; the study will continue for another three years, using data through 1990-91.

To be eligible for inclusion in the study, students had to meet two criteria. They had to be identified by SIS as (a) freshmen in 1984-85 and (b) students who had declared their intention to obtain degrees. The first criterion enabled the Commission to look at degree completion rates over time. The second criterion excluded those who might be called casual students, people who had not made a decision to pursue degrees. Sixty-nine thousand four hundred and ten (69,410) students met both criteria. An earlier version of the study had added a third criterion, that of having declared a major as well as a degree objective, but that part of the definition was dropped at the institutions' request.

Students eligible for inclusion in the retention and degree completion study were then looked up in SIS records for each succeeding year. Among other things, those records showed which if any campuses they had enrolled at, how many credit hours they had attempted, and whether they had obtained degrees.

The retention and degree completion study subdivided eligible students in four ways. The first two formed the basis of the study; the next two permitted race- and age-specific comparisons within the overall framework. (1) The study separated students by degree level into those pursuing certificates (programs of study lasting one year or less), associate degrees (these are usually two-year programs) and baccalaureate degrees (usually four-year programs). (2) For each degree level, on the basis of credit hours attempted, the study separated students into those attending on a full-time (24 credit hours per year) and a part-time (fewer than 24 hours per year) basis. At the institutions' request, any student who in any year attempted fewer than 24 credit hours was classified as a part-time student for the duration of the study. This decision reduced the size and increased the degree completion rate of each full-time student subgroup.

(3) At every degree level the study compared the records for Black students with the records for all students in a given category. (4) At every degree level the study compared the records for students younger than 25 with those for students 25 and older. The present policy paper omits age-specific information in order to concentrate upon information about retention and degree completion rates for Black students.

The data tables for this paper are available upon request. They are subdivided as previously described to identify students at three degree levels and two attendance categories. For each category of student, the following information is displayed: campuses enrolling students in that category in 1984-85; number of students in that category at each campus; those students' academic progress (see below) anywhere within Indiana public postsecondary education for each of four years (1984-85 through 1987-88); whether these students completed a degree requiring less time than the one they had originally intended to pursue; and whether they never again enrolled after the base year of 1984-85. For each year, the tables report academic progress in terms of the cumulative proportion of 1984-85 freshmen who completed degree programs, who were [still] enrolled, and who were no longer enrolled in Indiana public postsecondary education.